

12-12-1952

# Notes: Christmas Vesper: He Came Down from Heaven, 1952

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DATE

12/12/52

OCCASION

Christmas Vesper '52

THEME

He Come Down from Heaven

1. Certain<sup>many</sup> you have noticed - when the Nicene Creed is recited in our services - the <sup>mysterious</sup> word "heaven" occurs three times - it seems that <sup>what</sup> anything great & final happens in the world there is a contact between heaven & earth - the three phrases: "Manner of heaven & earth" - "Who for us men & for our salvation came down from heaven" - "He ascended into heaven" - three times we say that we believe that there is something, somewhere beyond the visible Universe - beyond the web of history <sup>which</sup> the world of time & man establishes contact at the crossroads of life - at birth when the <sup>creative</sup> process of creation becomes a personal matter - at death when a <sup>believer</sup> faces that other world - and at one other <sup>we</sup> <sup>consider</sup> great moment when you or I say for the first time in full, surrender, Golgotha faith: "I believe in our Lord J.C. - Who for us men & for our salvation came down from heaven" - [there is our theme for meditation] - the heart & meaning of <sup>Advent</sup> the Christmas story - "He came down" - if that did not happen on Christmas <sup>last</sup> then nothing happened except the birth of another Jewish baby - and a terrible, cruel, damnable job <sup>played</sup> on humanity - on all of us then <sup>today</sup> [tonight] this is the heart of the matter - this we believe or we believe nothing <sup>sure</sup> <sup>about</sup> <sup>heaven</sup> -
2. "He came down" - look at the words for a moment as if you were seeing & hearing them

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Vesper 1952

THEME

He Came Down

 ex  
 don't know  
 how to say  
 this

for the first time - what do they really mean?  
 Wouldn't one first think of them in terms  
 of space? - geographically? - "down from Canaan"  
 a place beyond the outer reaches of the Universe  
 where God dwells and from which He sent the  
 Baby to Bethlehem? Many people probably first think  
 of Heaven in this way - as a place - up in the sky  
 somewhere - due to the limitation of our speech -  
 or momentary thought, of course, persuaded as that

X Heaven is only secondarily a place. it is above  
 all the ~~physical~~ <sup>prophetic</sup> <sup>present</sup> <sup>sublime</sup> & evident & eternal of  
 X God in all the fullness of his majesty & mercy.  
 X when we go to heaven, we go <sup>fully</sup> & completely  
 X into the presence of Him who <sup>was already</sup> with  
 us here on earth. That is it - to be with God - that  
 is heaven. <sup>the survival</sup> <sup>in salvation</sup> <sup>rejoice</sup> <sup>of the saints</sup>

3. Now understand "He came down" - the ultimate  
 mystery & mercy of the Incarnation. in a Child's  
 eyes were the memories of the Nazareth & Bethlehem -  
 in his ears were the echoes of the "Hallelujah" of the  
 heavenly host - in this heart that which makes God God  
 and heaven heaven - an incredible, holy, consuming  
 love for the children of men - for you & for me &  
 so strong & so compassionate that it bore down  
 He with betwixt time & eternity - heaven & earth -  
 God and man - <sup>body</sup> <sup>with the garment</sup> He came down from heaven - but  
 in. He lost & bright stare heaven was with Him  
 and in Him. He brought heaven down - so that we  
 could touch & see it - in the hands & eyes of a  
 Baby - entered into our consciousness

from us the "mystery"  
 the end of our hope & desire



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4. "Well that is Xmas! And what have we  
done with it? What have we done with it?"

That is something for each one of us to answer  
for himself - never a Christmas comes but I  
remember - ~~the~~ May - the bitter loss of a sales-girl  
on Christmas Eve: & the coincidence that Helen  
and ~~promises~~ promises.

"For this your mother shivered in the cold  
For this you bled upon the bitter tree  
A yard of twine ribbon bought and sold  
A paper wreath; a day at home for me -  
O Prince of Peace! O Sherois Dear Rose!"

How mute you lie within your manger bed -  
The stone the angel rolled away, with tears  
[We've laid upon your mouth these thousand years.]

5. And then I wonder how many men & women  
in our world at Christmas 1952 would want to  
report - have to report. Major Scobie wrote to God  
in Graham Greene's "Heart of the Matter" - remember:  
"he is speaking to God - half of what he says is  
true - half is not -" "I am the guilty one  
because I have known the answers all the  
time. I have preferred to give you pain  
rather than to give human beings pain because  
I cannot observe your suffering. I can  
only imagine it. There are limits, however, to  
what I can do to you. I cannot go on

Thinking  
of  
suicide

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THEME

He Came Down

year after year insulting you. I cannot face  
 coming up to the altar and taking your body  
 & blood for the sake of a lie. I am now  
 going to try to get out of your reach. It  
 will be no use then sweeping the floor to  
 find me or searching for me over the mountains.  
You will be able to forget me, O God, for eternity.

6. And that's what he was wrong. Wrong some times  
 might - because the Child says that we have a  
 God who cannot forget, cannot tarry & cannot wait.  
 Who comes to the gate of our darkness on  
 Christmas to tell us that we belong to Him & that  
 we should come home - that's what we belong - <sup>we are</sup> <sup>rather</sup> ~~rather~~  
 7. And that's all! That is why He came down  
 from heaven to give us all that we have  
 over asked - perhaps all we should say is a  
 little prayer: "O God, while there is still  
 time and Christmas comes again move  
 us all that we can be" - with that  
 prayer we can all have, please God, a happy &  
 blessed time.

Remembering, loving, forgiving God.

He God of the prodigal Son & his Brother.

He God of the shepherds and Mary, and

Christmas